



Pleasantville School District

Best Practices (all content areas)

Best practices are instructional approaches and strategies for teaching and learning in today's classrooms, creating a differentiated learning environment.

Best practices focus on allowing students to be *actively engaged* so they can build and enhance their understanding of concepts and ideas.

To incorporate the following best practices effectively, teachers need to routinely reflect and collaborate on the instructional practices below, monitor student progress, and know and understand the subject they will be teaching at a deep enough level to be able to explain and apply his/her understanding in a *variety* of formats.

1. Plan and teach lessons to support full implementation of the program

- * Abide by the school's lesson component breakdown
- * Abide by the program's required components (ex.- LAL guided reading)
- * Begin every lesson with an anticipatory set that encourages the students to want to know more
- * Integrate reading, writing and problem-solving into the established content instruction
- * In math, teach computation through problem-solving
- * Keep focused on monthly pacing calendars
- * Implement a continuous review of previously learned skills daily (ex. mental math & 'Big Ideas')
- * Set clear and challenging goals

2. Establish a physical classroom environment to support learning.

- * Establish and post written routines & procedures for a well-run classroom
- * Have a content-rich environment
- * In math, provide the necessary tools to develop spatial sense through the exploration of real objects (manipulatives)
- * Create a physical environment that supports cooperative learning/group work
- * Utilize all classroom space efficiently and effectively

- * Create space/stations for independent learning
- * To familiarize students with daily learning goals and outcomes (post objectives)
- * Post and update student work frequently

3. Establish a classroom climate focused on student-centered learning.

- * Encourage collaborative group/partner learning by setting up guidelines for group work and assigning student roles in a cooperative learning setting
- * Teach note-taking skills in order to improve retention
- * Provide opportunities for independent practice, self-assessment and reflection
- * Provide opportunities for recognition (contests and incentives)
- * Reinforce effort (provide points along the way-not just the end)

4. Support problem-solving, critical thinking skills and linguistic communication

- * Model and encourage discourse i.e. thinking aloud
- * Provide opportunities for writing on a daily basis
- * Check for appropriate language arts skills in all written work
- * Develop content rich literacy (academic vocabulary)
- * Develop content fluency (example-times tables)
- * Establish a classroom environment that promotes student inquiry and questioning
- * Teach content specific problem-solving strategies (QUASI for LAL, USA for math)
- * Pose problems in authentic contexts

5. Use assessment to support student learning.

- * Address all cluster areas through open-ended questions
- * Use assessment data to drive instruction
- * Provide students with immediate feedback

- * Re-teach and retest when necessary (intervention)
- * Circulate the classroom to assess independent and group work
- * Use rubrics to assess work
- * Establish a homework policy
- * Keep portfolios for each student
- * Conference with students regularly regarding their progress

6. Provide differentiated instruction by implementing a variety of instructional methods and interventions.

- * Utilize graphic organizers
- * Devote less attention to **telling** students about concepts- encourage discovery learning
- * Use less worksheets and use more interactive learning strategies
- * Provide individual & small group instruction when additional support is necessary
- * Infuse current technology into lessons regularly
- * Help students seek connections to skills previously taught
- * Vary the types of instructional activities used with students

7. Professionalism

- * Promote positive educational discourse among colleagues
- * Participate in classroom visitations (vertical & horizontal)
- * Attend on-going grade level and content meetings and professional development offered by the district
- * Share strategies (best practices) at meetings
- * Keep a teacher portfolio with strategies, ideas, and meeting agendas
- * Establish school/family/community partnerships
- * Keep abreast of current educational trends and best practices

